

# ULTIMATE COMICS™ **X-MEN®**

ISSUE **08**



*Ksare*  
**SPENCER  
BARBERI  
WONG  
VLASCO  
GRACIA**

**MARVEL**



**LIVING IN A WORLD  
WHERE MUTANTS ARE  
HATED AND FEARED MORE  
THAN EVER, ONE GROUP  
OF YOUNG HEROES HAS  
BANDED TOGETHER TO**

# ULTIMATE COMICS X-MEN




## PREVIOUSLY:


When the Southeast Asian Republic (SEAR) spun out of control and was reborn as Tian, the twin Heavenly Cities, it created a safe haven for mutants worldwide. Before it was overthrown, SEAR scientists created both a virus that eliminated the mutant gene and a special serum that would enhance human DNA. The serum, or The Source, spawned a species of superhumans currently known as the People who sparked a revolution led by the brothers Xorn of the Celestials and Zorn of the Eternals. Knowing the danger it posed, Nick Fury sent his covert mutant team Ultimate X (Liz Allen, Karen Grant, and Derek Morgan) in to investigate, but it appeared they had gone rogue and stayed behind in Tian...

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There are two great cities, floating in the air.



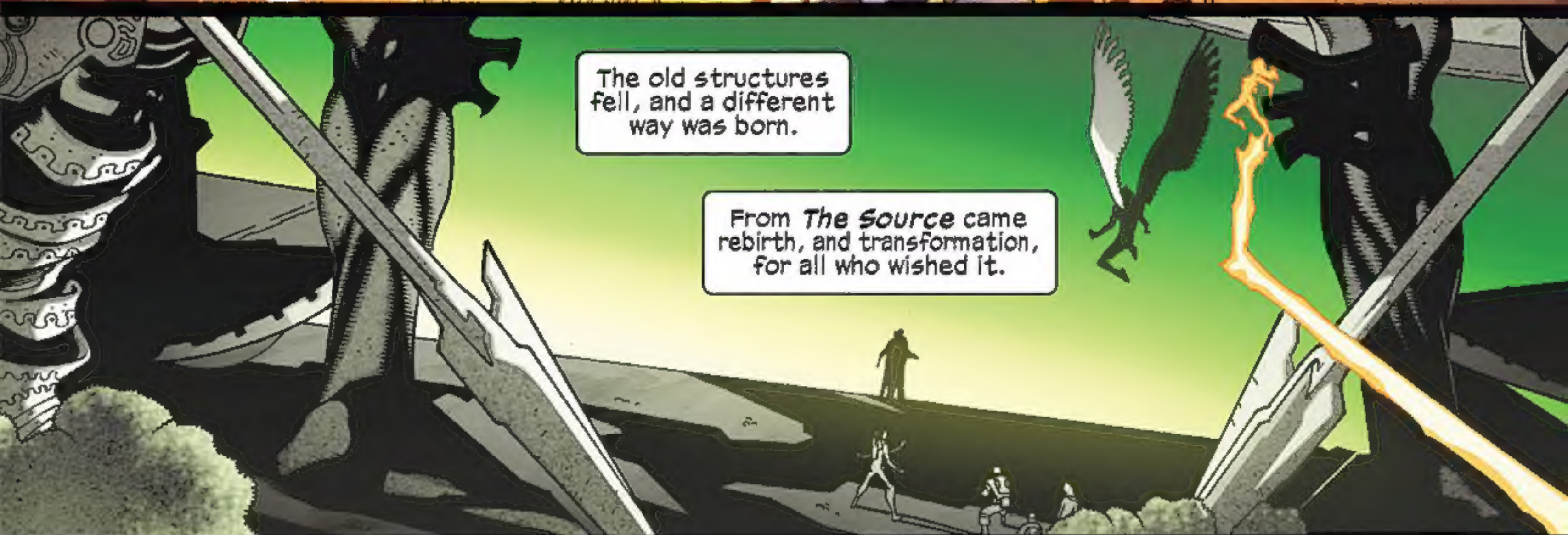
Cities forged from suffering. Suffering brought on--*as it always is*--by man's unceasing hunger for power.

*Here*, the masters sought to make weapons of the oppressed. As history instructed them.



But this time their slaves became something *greater* than soldiers.

This time, something *new* happened.



The old structures fell, and a different way was born.


From *The Source* came rebirth, and transformation, for all who wished it.






Two brothers. *Xorn* and *Zorn*. Enlightenment and Entropy.

They would lead this place now.




They turned away all those who would challenge them.



And let the call ring out, through a world that would have feared them--

*Here* was escape for the persecuted. *Here* was hope for the hopeless. All were welcome.



There are two great cities, floating in the air.

The Celestial and The Eternal. All bow to their glory.



All Hall  
Tian.







WASHINGTON, D.C.

Nick Fury.

Val Cooper. 'Bout time we got to sit down. Coffee?

I'm good, thanks.

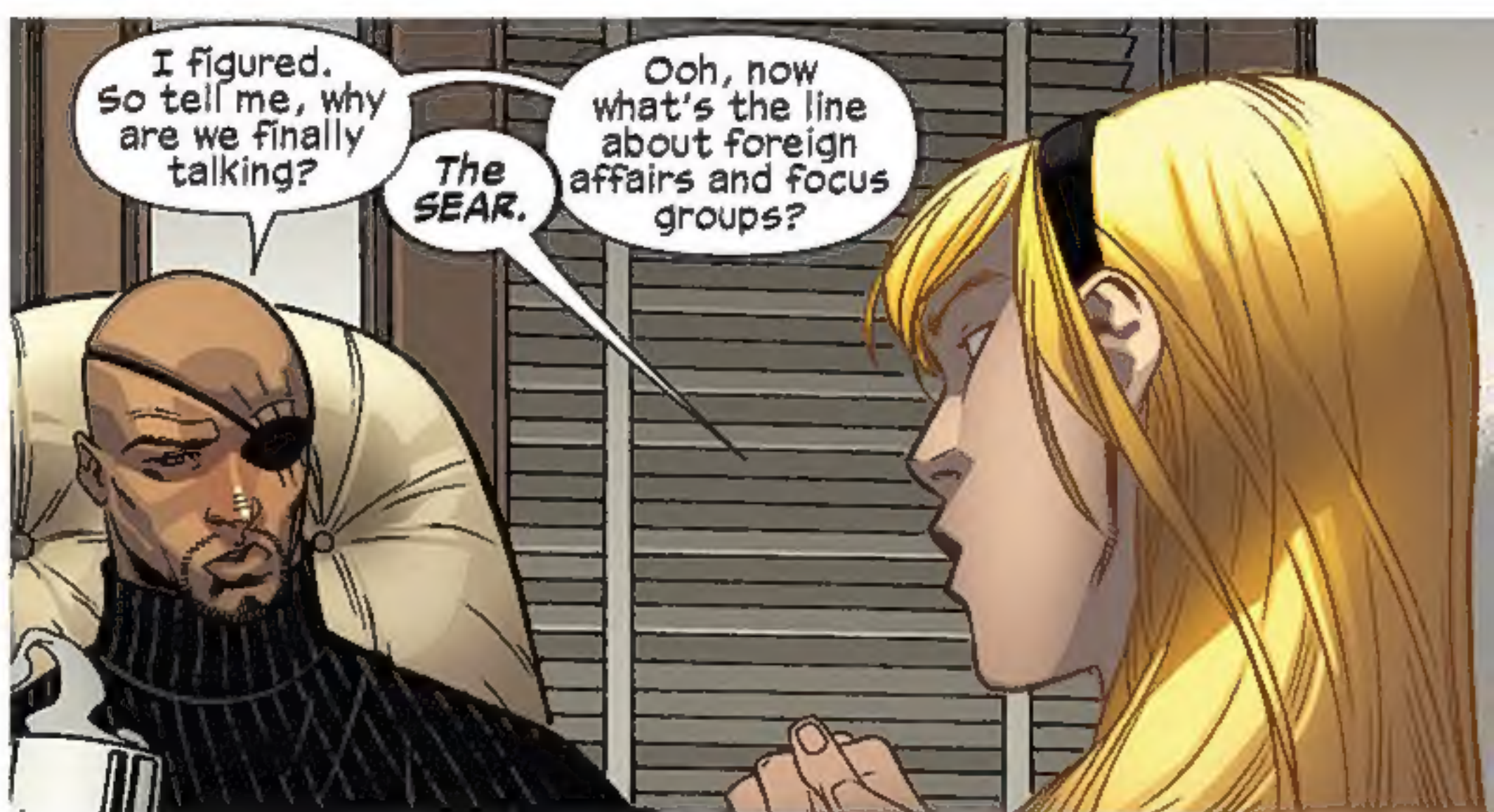


So how are things on political?

Head above water.

I hear they got the votes for impeachment.

Yeah, well, you know how whips like making that overtime money.



I figured. So tell me, why are we finally talking?

The SEAR.

Ooh, now what's the line about foreign affairs and focus groups?



Ultimate X. Homo Superior S.H.I.E.L.D. operatives who pop up on the pay charts twelve hours before they're dropped into Southeast Asia. I'm special liaison on mutant affairs. You had to figure that would get my attention.

I had been trying so hard.



"I'm just trying to make sense of all this. The former government of the SEAR engineers a virus to eradicate the potentiality for mutant births on a global scale.

"It then creates a serum to move themselves up the genetic sweepstakes any number of levels.

"But the first injectees get a different idea, and they overthrow their own government, setting up what they're now calling Tian."

"Well, yes, they had a big week."





"You send your right hand in-- Clint Barton, *Hawkeye*--to make sure we get some of the serum for ourselves.

"Then they end up...just *giving* it to you."

"So see? We had a big week, too."



"Right, but then, let's come back to *Ultimate X-or*, as I understand it, the new project, code name *Runaways*.

"Your mutants get orders via *mindtalk* to pretend to be the first takers of the new regime's open door policy. In actuality, they're your inside men."

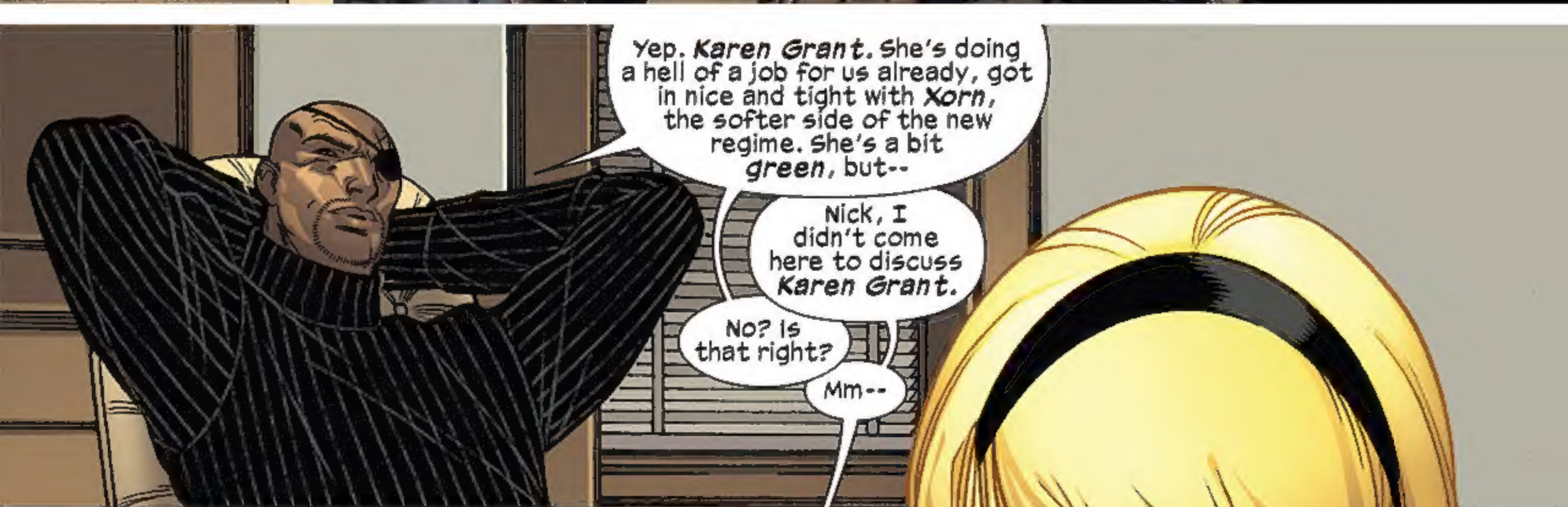
"I don't do this stuff for the thank you's, Valerie."



Right. So there's *three* of them, yeah?

Last I counted.

A firestarter, a pair of wings... and their squad leader, a telepath?



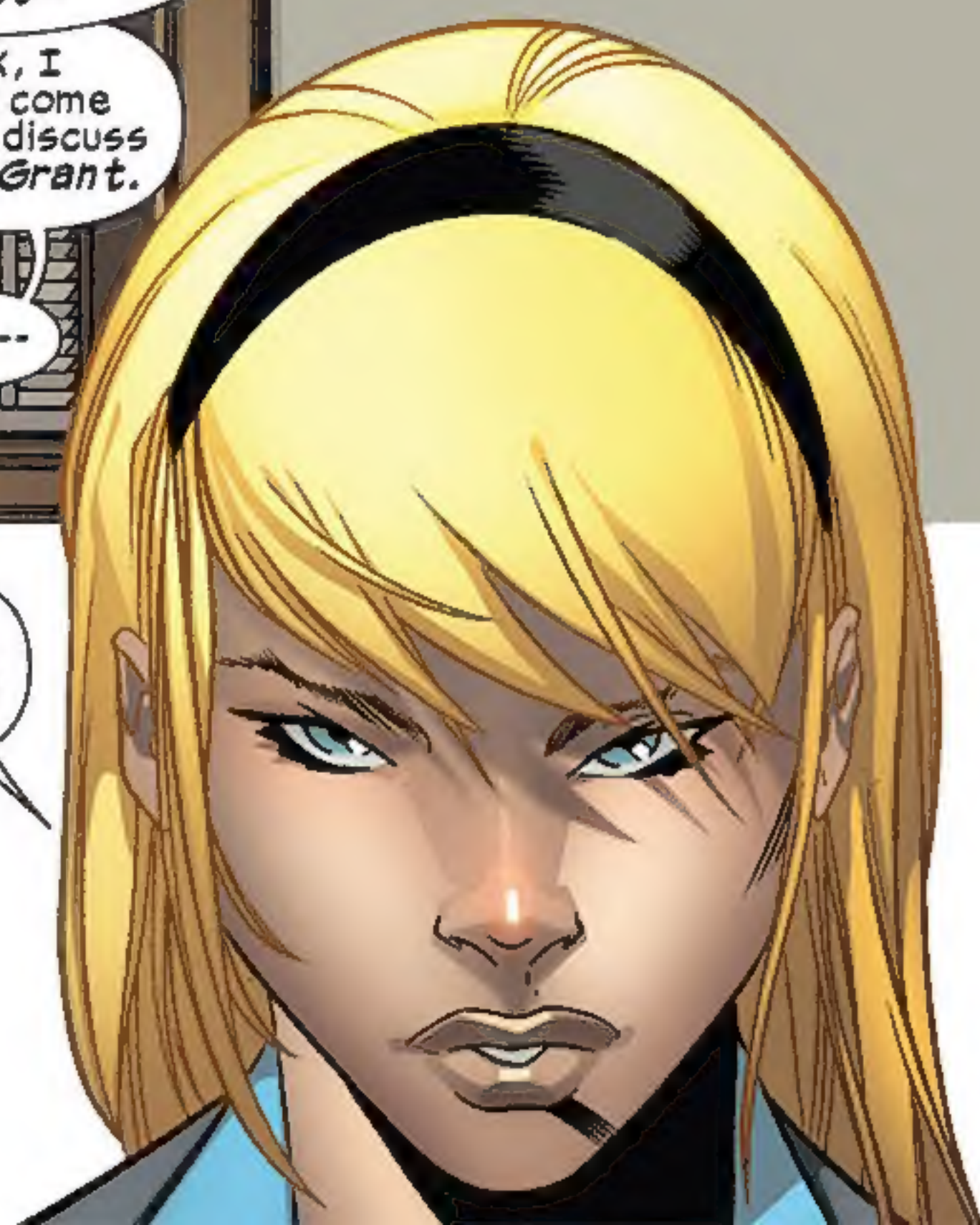
Yep. *Karen Grant*. She's doing a hell of a job for us already, got in nice and tight with *Xorn*, the softer side of the new regime. She's a bit *green*, but--

Nick, I didn't come here to discuss *Karen Grant*.

No? Is that right?

Mm--

I want to talk to you about *Jean Grey*.





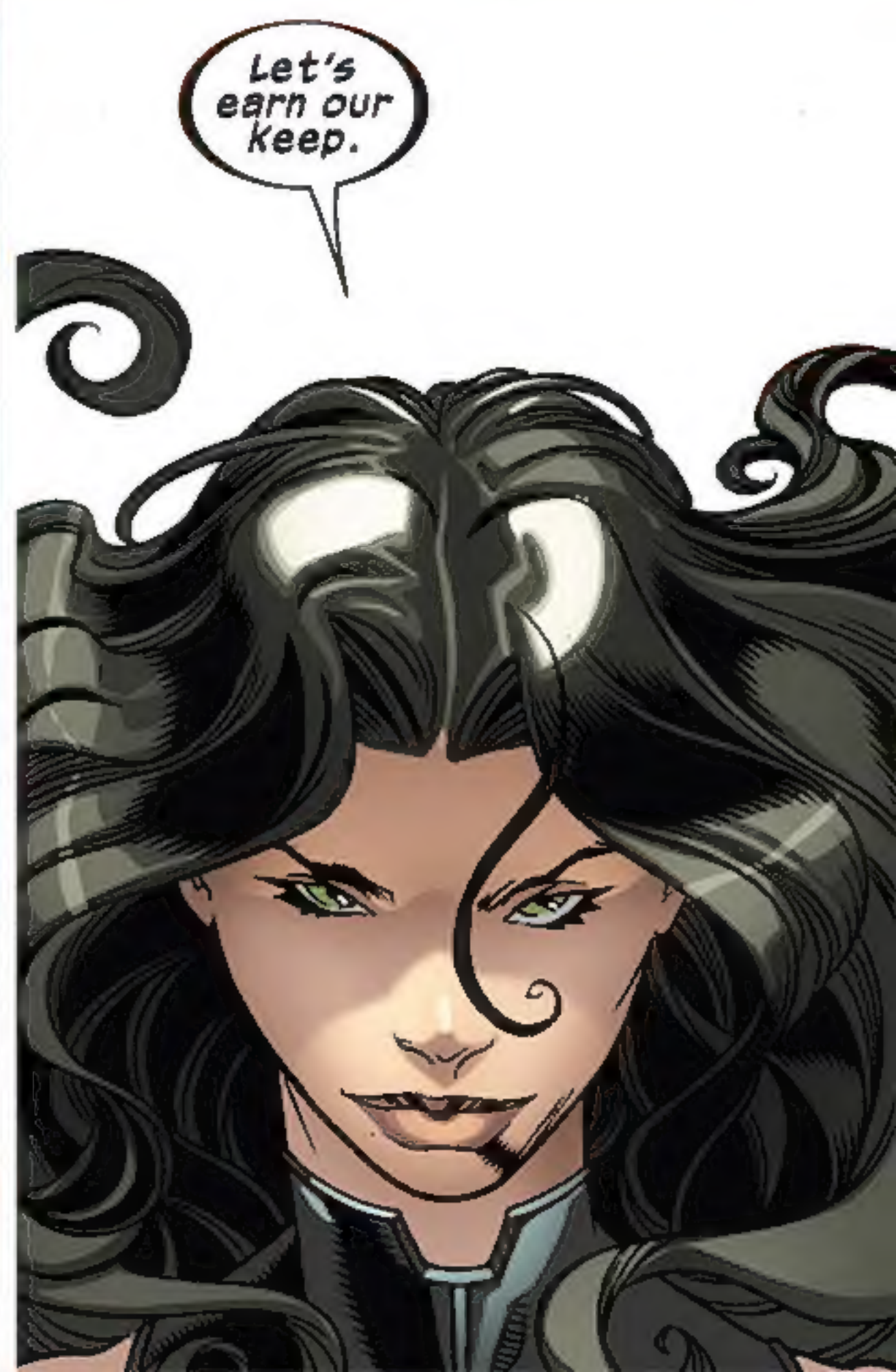
TIAN.

So...what  
are we looking  
at?

Child traffickers.  
About forty kids on the  
boat, en route to Cambodia.  
Smugglers have gotten used  
to using these routes,  
consider them friendly  
water.



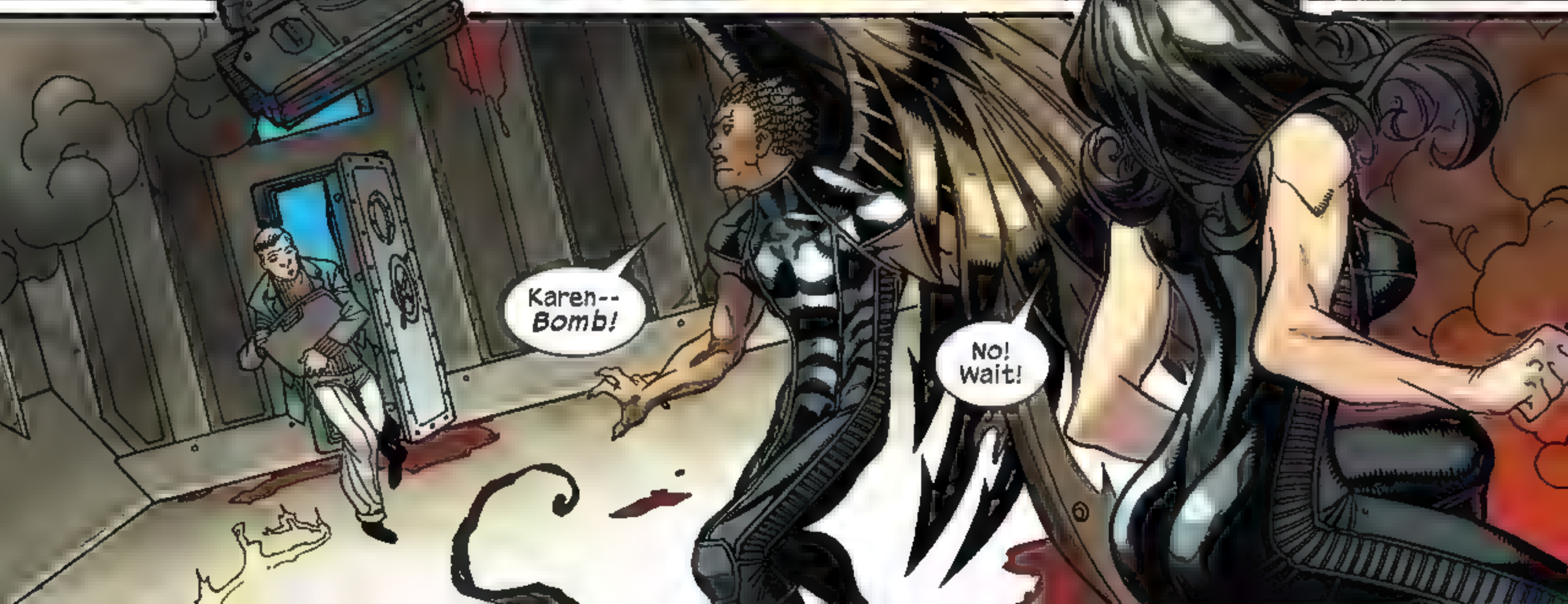




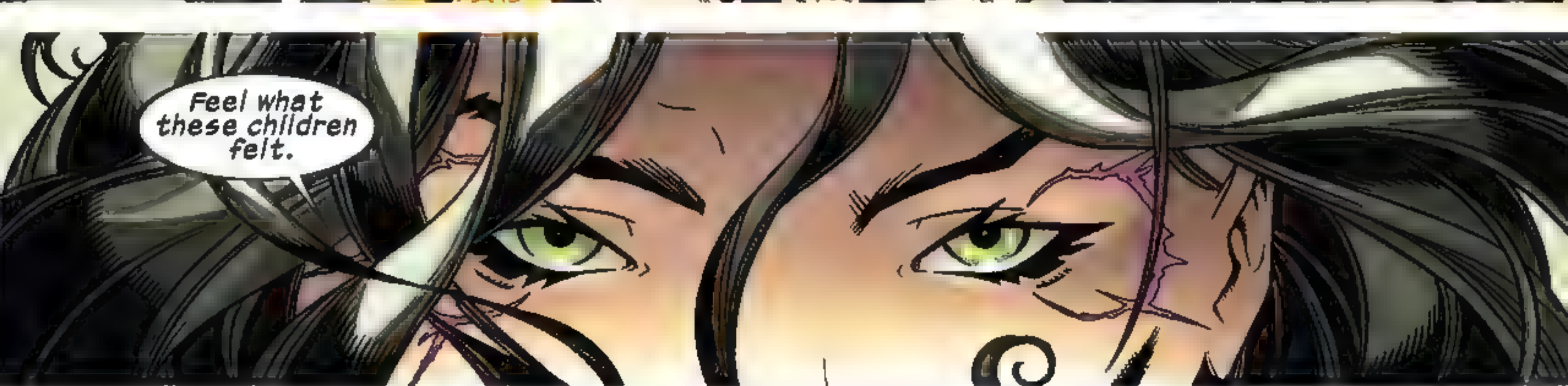
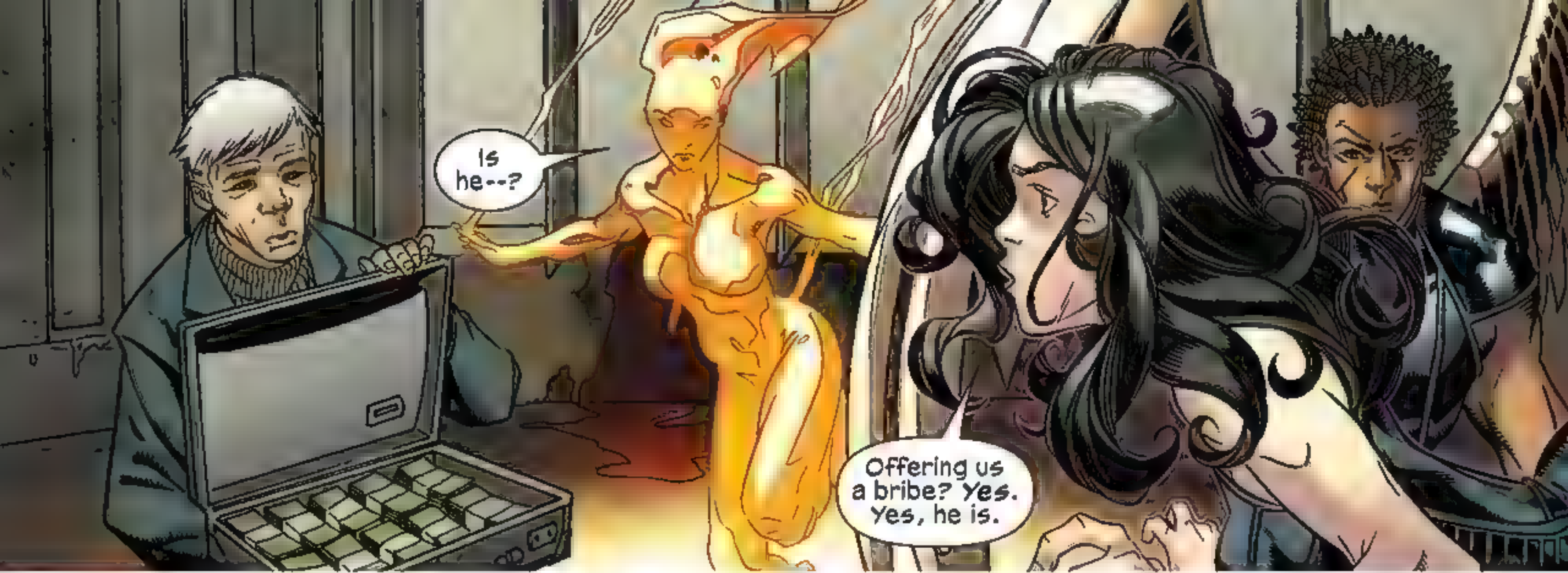
















So we good here?

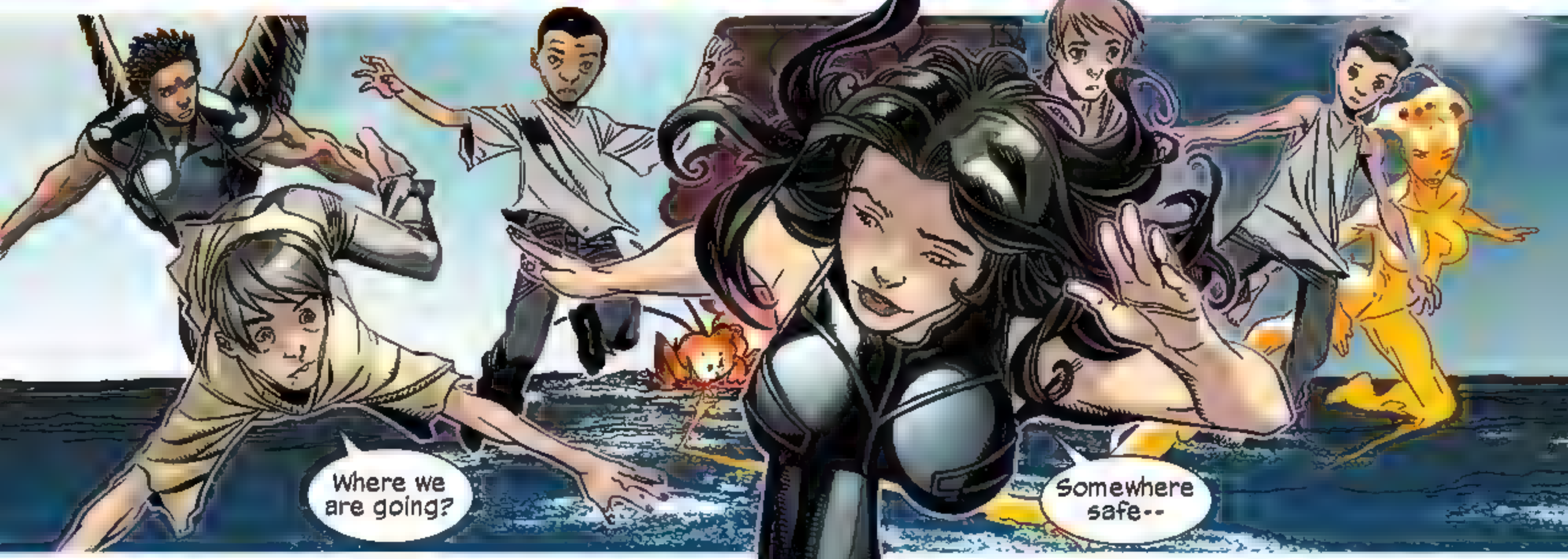
Head count looks right--Liz, you wanna...?

Would love to.

All right then--



Let's head home.



Where we are going?

Somewhere safe--



"Somewhere better."





That is her *real* name, isn't it? Karen Grant is Jean Grey.

I've got a very thick dossier that says otherwise.

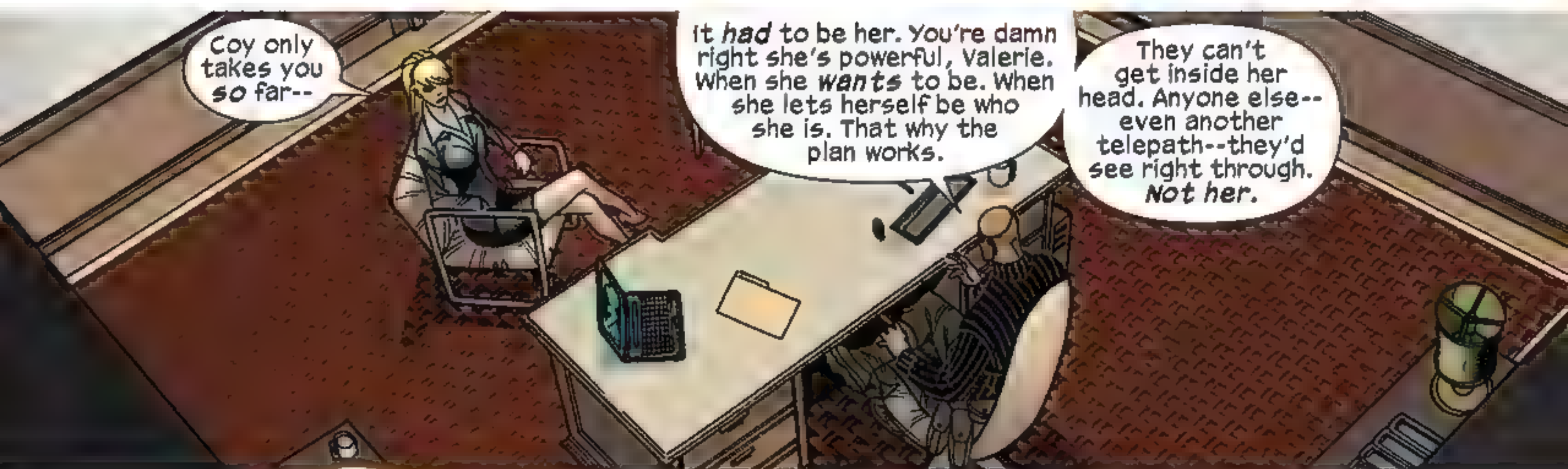
The one thing you could *not* do here is insult my intelligence. *Jean Grey.* That's her.



If you say so.

I'm trying to understand, Nick. I *really* am. Because right now, to my eyes, it looks like you just wrapped a bow around the most powerful weapon in the country and handed it over as a *welcome* gift to a brand new threat.

At least I got them something.



Coy only takes you so far--

It *had* to be her. You're damn right she's powerful, Valerie. When she *wants* to be. When she lets herself be who she is. That why the plan works.

They can't get inside her head. Anyone else--even another telepath--they'd see right through. *Not her.*



She's not even in her right mind.

And we should *all* be thankful for that.

This country has half her friends locked up in camps. The other half are dead. These guys are preaching *mutant unification*. If I were her, I would sell us out. How do you know you can trust the asset here?

How do I know I can trust the asset? Let me ask you something, Valerie--

How do you know what's real?

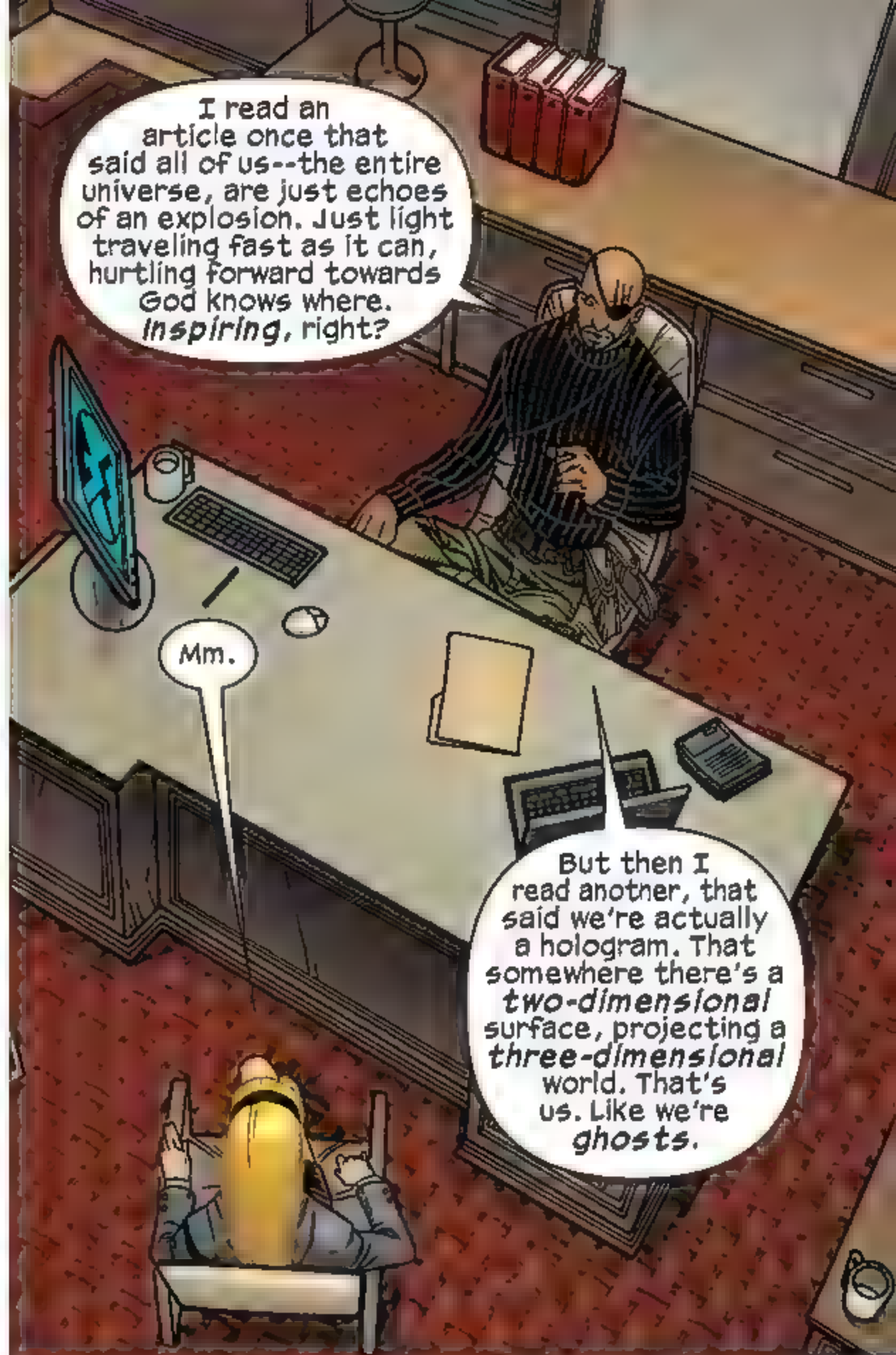




You have a really nice dorm room.

Indulge me. How do you know this conversation we're having is really happening?

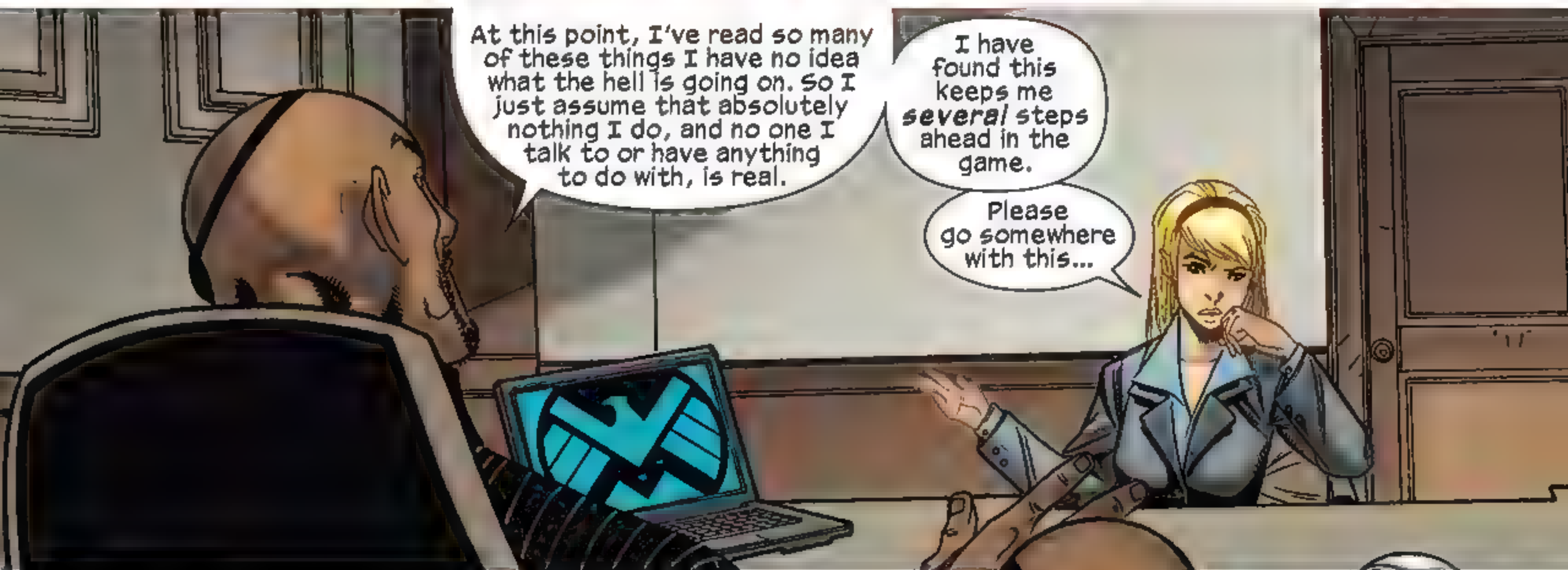
I pinch myself.



I read an article once that said all of us--the entire universe, are just echoes of an explosion. Just light traveling fast as it can, hurtling forward towards God knows where. Inspiring, right?

Mm.

But then I read another, that said we're actually a hologram. That somewhere there's a two-dimensional surface, projecting a three-dimensional world. That's us. Like we're ghosts.



At this point, I've read so many of these things I have no idea what the hell is going on. So I just assume that absolutely nothing I do, and no one I talk to or have anything to do with, is real.

I have found this keeps me several steps ahead in the game.

Please go somewhere with this...



Oh I intend to--Karen, can you come in here?





You wanted to see me, Nick?

What the hell?!



Valerie Cooper, meet Karen Grant. Our inside man on the outside.

How is she here?



And here you mocked my metaphysics.

I mean, she's there--

No. I'm not.



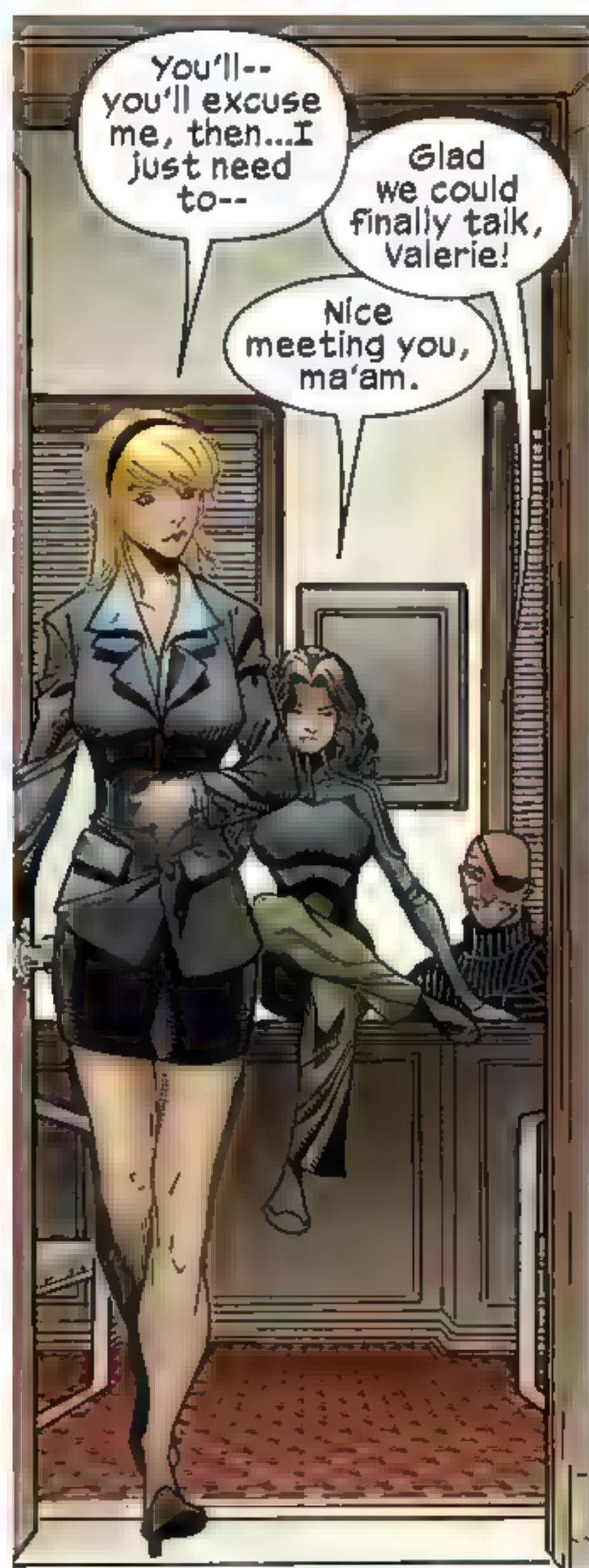
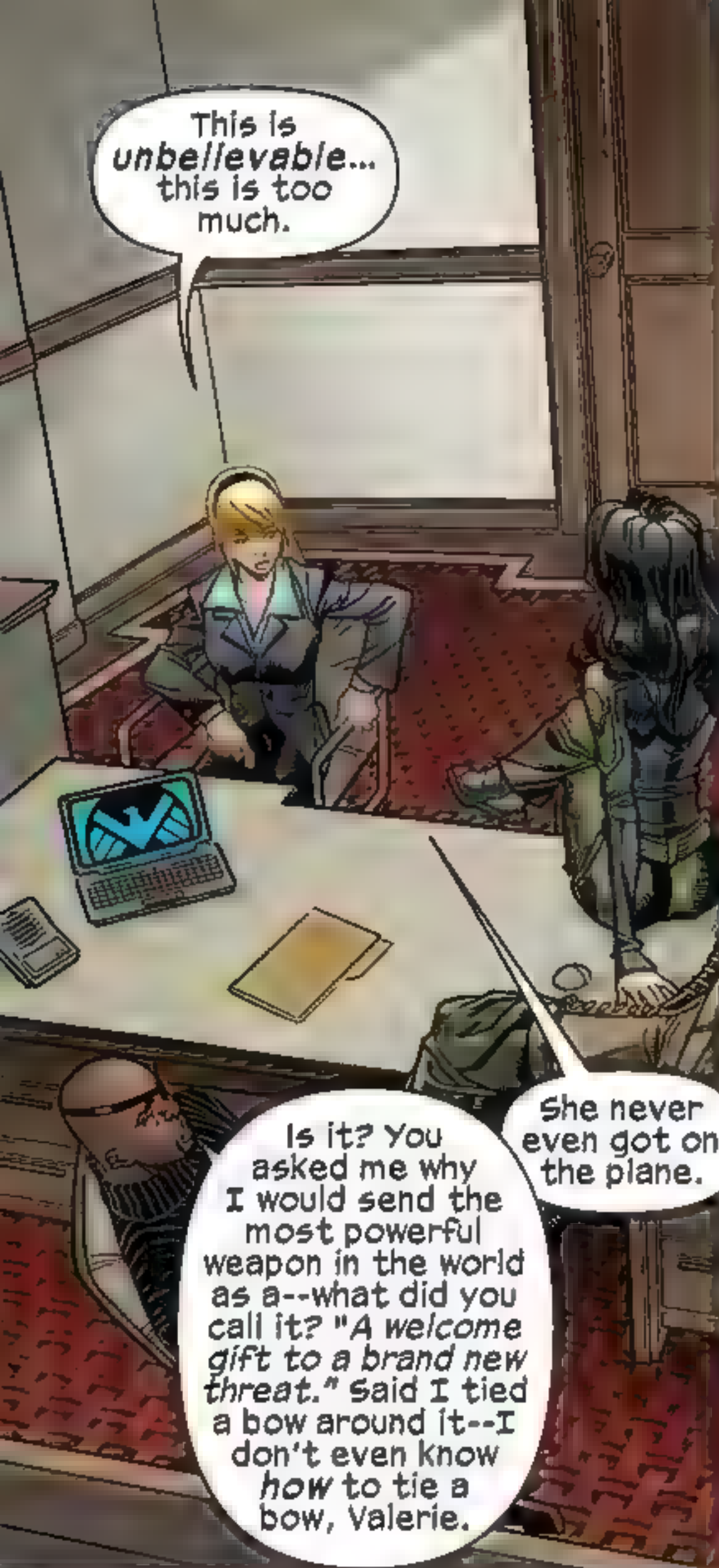
But...they've seen you. There's intel, video--

They see what their brains tell them they're seeing. I tell their brains.

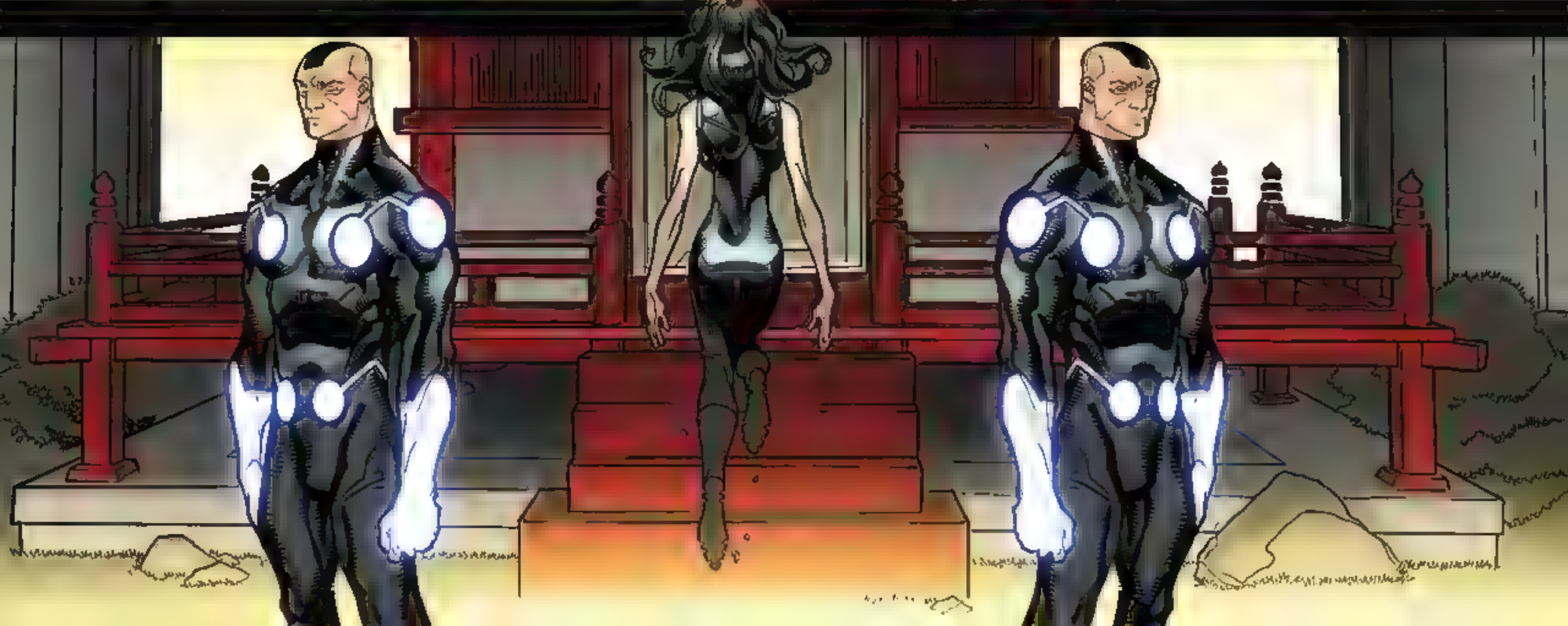
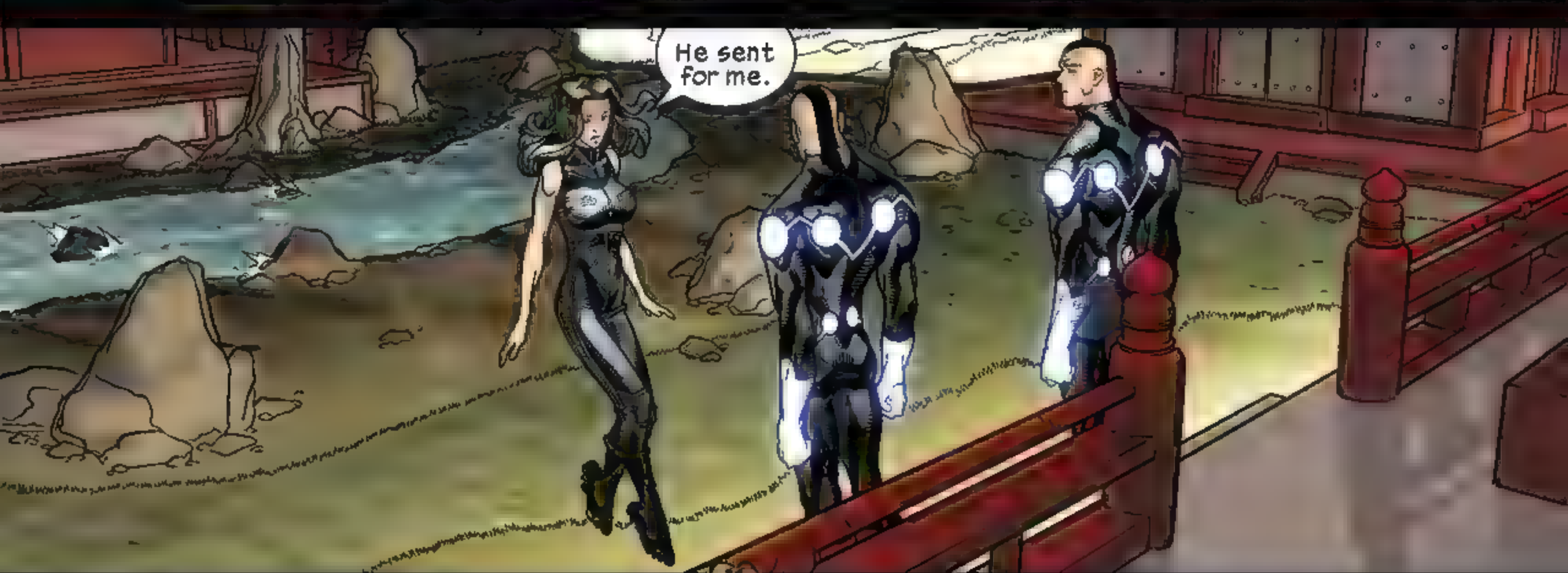
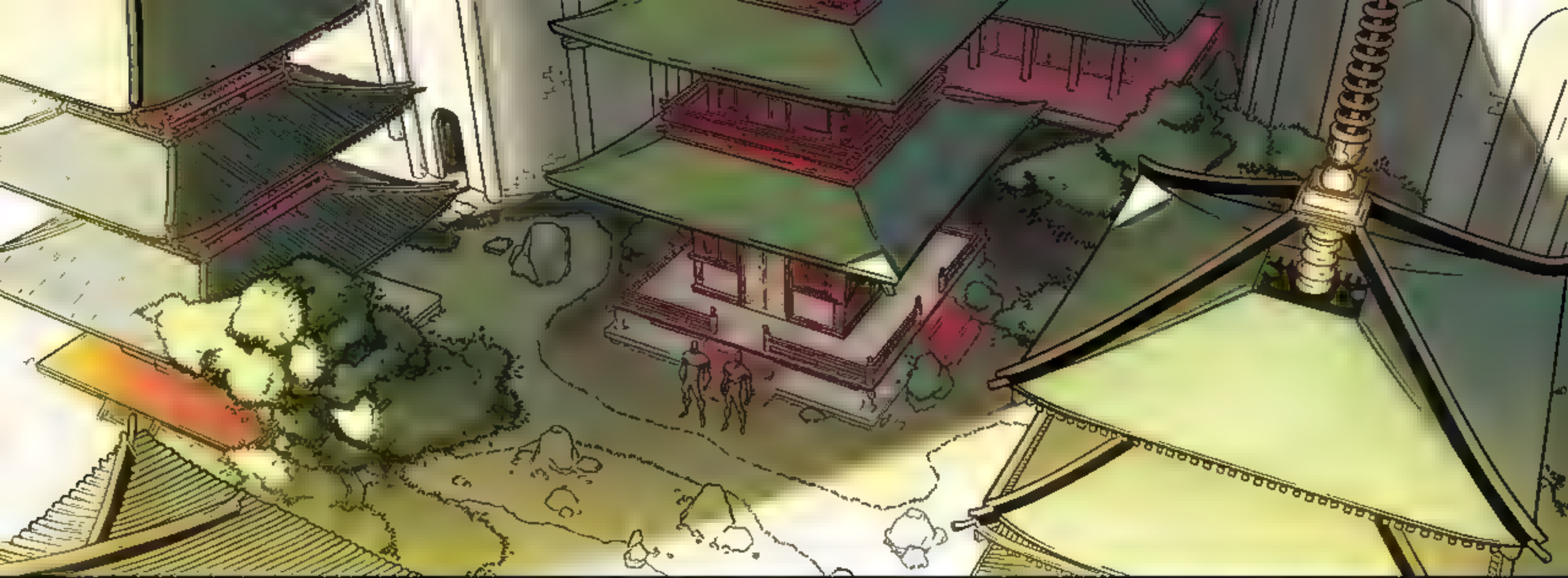
My God...all of them?

Well, I'm telling the whole world, just to be safe.













You  
wanted to  
see me,  
sir?

Yes, my child.  
Welcome.

I am very  
pleased by your  
accomplishments  
this day, make sure  
to pass along my  
thanks to your  
team.

Of course.  
We just want  
to show you how  
grateful we are.  
For a chance  
here.



Mm. I have  
been thinking--  
about the man  
who sent you  
here.

Nick  
Fury.

He is an  
arrogant one,  
yes? I can  
remember...before  
my brother and I  
were changed, his  
ships in the skies  
above us, going  
wherever they  
wished.



You're  
certain he  
still believes  
you're *there*,  
with him?

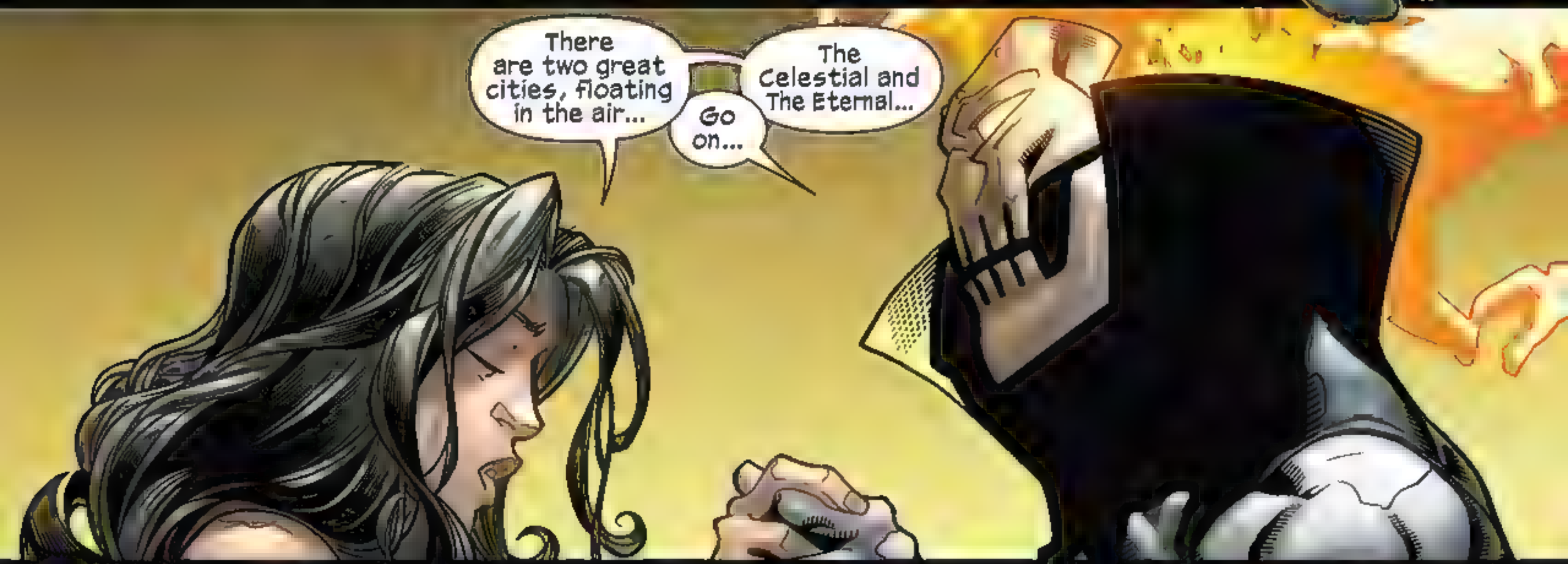


Yes, sir. He  
thinks he has  
defenses against  
me, but I've  
found a way  
around them.

Good. The  
road before us  
is a difficult one,  
and I can't allow  
him to interfere.  
You understand  
that, don't you,  
child?

I do.









...Jean Grey.

All Hail Tian.

TO BE CONTINUED...



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